imported through Cochin Port during the last three years and crrent year (upto July, 2003) by NRIs is as under :

Year	No. of cars imported
2000-2001	248
2001-2002	98
2002-2003	98

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The import of vehicles by 9 persons has been taken up for investigation on the basis of information that the cars imported were undervalued and there was mis-declaration.

(d) and (e) One complaint was received regarding delay in clearance of the car imported by Shri Ziyad Thachanakath Mohammed Koya, Ernakulam and harassment during course of investigation. Investigation, however, revealed undervaluation in the value of the car was therefore assessed as Rs. 11,77,070/-. The vehicle was cleared on 20-05-2003 after payment of duties on assessed value.

Merger of IFCI

†2892. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY :
SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether representations have been received by Government from the Co-ordination Committee of Employees and Officers Union of Industrial Finance Corporation of India through Members of Parliament in which they have requested Government that keeping in view the financial condition of the Corporation and security of the services of the staff of I.F.C.I., it should be merged with Industrial Development Bank of India, State Bank of India or the Life Insurance Corporation of India;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government are considering the representations sympathetically?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL) : (a) and (b) The representations

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

dated 21-11-2002 and 9-7-2003 of the Co-ordination Committee of IFCI Officers' and Employees Associations requesting for merger of IFCI with either Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) or Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) have been received by the Government.

(c) These representations have already been considered. At present there is no merger of IFCI with IDBI is contemplated.

Investment in Agriculture Sector

2893. SHRI D.P.YADAV : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that due to the higher rate of interest on loans given to the farmers as compared to the rate of interest on loans given to industries, housing and other sectors, there is steep decrease in the investment in agriculture sector; and

(b) if so, the action proposed to be taken in this regard and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL) : (a) and (b) The interest rates on loans given by commercial banks are now deregulated with the exception that the interest rate on loans up to Rs. 2 lakh should not exceed the Prime Lending Rate (PLR). Commercial Banks are, therefore, free to decide their lending rates on loans above Rs. 2 lakhs taking into account cost of funds, risk perception, credit worthiness of the borrower, etc.

Consequent on the statement made while presenting Union Budget on 28th February, 2003 regarding the need for passing on the benefits of lower rates of interest to agriculture and the SSI Sector, the Indian Banks Association (IBA) has advised all its member banks on 5th March, 2003 to take appropriate action in the matter of introduction of interest rate bank of 2% above and below its PLR for secured advances. Subsequently the IBA on 12-7-2003 advised all public sector banks that the rate of interest on crop loan upto Rs. 50,000/- should not exceed 9%.